

## ITEM 7 - Dedicated Schools Grant, Speech and Language Therapy for Schools

Schools Forum - 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2025

### Recommendations

The Schools Forum is asked to: -

1. Note the outcome of the tender for schools-based SALT and the recommendation to appoint 2 suppliers to work in designated clusters.
2. Note that to avoid service disruption the existing service will run until 31<sup>st</sup> October 2025.
3. Note that the contracts will start on 1<sup>st</sup> November 2025 for an initial period of 3 years, with an option to extend for a further 2 years (3+1+1 model).

**Members of Forum allowed to vote:** - All school and academy members are able to vote. Only early years representatives from the non-schools' members are able to vote. Non-school members even if represented by school staff are not eligible to vote.

### 1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 In response to concerns from schools about limited access to speech and language therapy (SALT) in mainstream settings, rising EHCP numbers and delays in support leading to parental complaints, the Council and SWL ICB agreed last year to disaggregate the existing jointly commissioned therapies contract.
- 1.2 Under the new **aligned commissioning model**:
  - A) **The Council** commissions statutory SALT for children and young people with EHCPs in mainstream schools.
  - B) **The ICB** commissions universal and targeted SALT and Occupational Therapy (OT) services to meet wider community needs.
- 1.3 This approach is designed to focus resources more effectively on interventions, not just assessments, reduce waiting times and improve equity of provision.

### 2. Schools-Based SALT Procurement

- 2.1 The Council has completed the tender process for the DSG-funded schools-based SALT service. The Invitation to Tender was published on 4 May 2025 and closed on 4 June 2025.
- 2.2 **Seven bids** were received and evaluated by a multi-agency panel, including Council officers, an NHS safeguarding representative, headteachers/SENCOs, and parent/young people representatives — ensuring both professional and family voices were reflected.
- 2.3 The **Award Report**, now progressing through governance, recommends awarding two contracts:
  - A) One provider for the **North and South SEND clusters**
  - B) Another for the **Central cluster**

### **3. Next Steps for Schools-Based SALT**

- 3.1 Explore urgency procedures to expedite the contract award process if feasible.
- 3.2 Conclude negotiations with CHS in relation to service delivery until 31<sup>st</sup> October 2025 in light of staff departures already flagged by CHS. We await confirmation of numbers and financial implications.
- 3.3 Reallocate resources as required to procure SALT from Allen Speech and Language Ltd to provide additional capacity until 31<sup>st</sup> October 2025.
- 3.4 Progress staff transfer planning (CHS have indicated up to three staff may TUPE transfer to new providers).
- 3.5 Issue communications to schools and parents.

### **4. ICB Commissioning: SALT and OT**

- 4.1 Negotiations with CHS for the ICB's direct award of SALT and OT services are nearing conclusion.
- 4.2 CHS have confirmed they will:
  - A) Continue to provide SALT for special schools and Enhanced Learning Provisions (ELPs).
  - B) Withdraw OT services from education settings.
  - C) Cease providing non-statutory initial assessments for school-aged children.
- 4.3 A revised specification has been developed with CHS to align service delivery with the available funding.

### **5 Summary**

- 5.1 We have successfully concluded the procurement process for schools-based SALT. However, the timelines for the two preferred providers to commence work have slipped due to the need to fully involve parents and young people in the evaluation, as well as to complete extensive due diligence checks, given that one of the providers is new to the market.
- 5.2 The recommended short-term extension of existing provision will allow for effective mobilisation, TUPE transfer of staff, and the orderly handover of responsibilities, helping to avoid any disruption to services. The two-provider model for schools-based SALT remains the recommended approach, as it will ensure broader coverage and greater sustainability. In parallel, ICB negotiations continue to define the scope of universal and targeted SALT and OT provision.

#### **Recommendations**

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**Date:** 17/09/2025

## Appendix 1. SEND CLUSTERS

SEND Clusters for schools-based delivery		
North Cluster wards	Central Cluster wards	South Cluster
Crystal Palace and Upper Norwood Norbury Park Norbury & Pollards Hill Thornton Heath Bensham Manor West Thornton Selhurst South Norwood	Woodside Addiscombe West Addiscombe East Shirley North Shirley South Park Hill & Whitgift Fairfield Broad Green Waddon South Croydon	Selsdon & Addington Village New Addington North New Addington South Selsdon Vale & Forestdale Sanderstead Purley Oaks & Riddlesden Purley & Woodcote Coulsdon Town Kenley Old Coulsdon